

MACAULAY'S USE OF LITERATURE

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an account of the works at Saint Paul's in
Ward's London
Spy* I am almost ashamed to quote such
nauseous
balderdash ; but I have been forced to
descend even lower,
if possible, in search of materials/ * Tom
Brown was a
cleverer and better educated writer than
Ward, and his
works are still readable. Him Macaulay cites
to describe the
fashion in which criminals were whipped at
the cart's tail²
and to show why the Presbyterian divines of
1689 were not
eager for the success of the comprehension
bill.³ In discuss-
ing the state of the coinage in 1695 he refers
to ' a facetious
story, which I do not venture to quote', told
by Brown
' about a conversation between the ordinary
of Newgate
and a clipper '.⁴ In describing the distress
which pre-
vailed in England in 1693 he takes an
illustration of its
prevalence from Brown. 'An idle man of wit
and plea-
sure, who little thought that his buffoonery
would ever be
cited to illustrate the history of his times,
complained that,
in this year, wine ceased to be put on many
hospitable
tables where he had been accustomed to see
it, and that its
place was supplied by punch.' ⁵

Any printed stuff of the period was of value
to Macaulay,
if it threw the smallest light on the topic he
was dealing
with, and could furnish a touch or a detail for
his pictures.
Nothing, however, could be of so much use as

the dramatic literature of the time, since the object of the stage was to represent men and manners, and its representation of both had been accepted as true by the time itself. There are periods in the history of the stage when the dramas produced have had a direct bearing on contemporary politics. During part of the reign of Charles II—during the national

¹1, 340, n. (iii).

²1, 418 (iii).

³ III, 1400, n. (xi).

* V, 2252 (xix).

⁵ V, 2565, n. (xxi).